

## CSRB AND DHRM ANNOUNCE PILOT MEDIATION PROGRAM

Norma Middleton

Have you ever been involved in a grievance hearing? How much time and emotional energy did it take to prepare?

Were you :

- intimidated by the formal setting and the number of people involved?
- frustrated with the amount of time and bureaucracy involved?
- anxiously waiting and wondering what would happen?
- wondering if people heard and understood your issues?
- worried about your grievance becoming part of a public record?

Do you wish there was a way you could simply talk to the other person confidentially and work out a solution together? Now there is!

Former Governor Leavitt signed an Executive Order on Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) in May, 2003. This order created an ADR Council to implement additional ways to resolve issues in state agencies. Mediation is one form of ADR. Under the direction of the ADR Council, the Career Service Review Board (CSRB) and Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) are delighted to announce a pilot mediation program for state employee grievances.

What is mediation? Mediation is a voluntary, confidential and collaborative approach that helps individuals resolve issues themselves. In mediation, you work directly with the other party to create mutually agreeable solutions. This is not a "discovery" process. Minimal records are kept, and mediators are bound by ethical standards that prevent the sharing of any information from the mediation session.

How does it work? Trained mediators will assist you through a structured mediation session. The mediator is a neutral third party with no material prior relationship with either party. Mediators have expertise in communication and problem solving, and are there to help the parties determine the best way to resolve an issue. One goal of mediation is to create a level playing field that enables each person to negotiate in their own best interest and to speak

confidentially, in a very frank and direct way. Self determination is another important aspect of mediation. In a formal grievance, you present your case and wait for a higher authority to decide. You may or may not be satisfied with the results of the grievance. In mediation, you create your own solutions and agree to solutions you can live with.

Many private and public employers successfully use mediation for employee issues, to improve communication and save time and money. We are confident that this pilot program will benefit everyone involved. DHRM is responsible to develop statewide standards and policies for all mediation of employee issues, and for mediator assignments. The pilot program will run for three to six months, and is limited to formal grievances filed between steps two (written grievance to the supervisor) and six (CSRB). We will then assess the pilot, make adjustments, and possibly expand services to employee issues not involved in a formal grievance process.

This pilot was designed with input from both managers and employees. The "Wild Bunch" Certified Public Manager team lead focus groups and did extensive research and analysis to identify concerns, suggestions and ways to make the program valuable and practical for state employees. We would like to thank everyone involved in the focus groups for your interest and feedback. We would also like to thank the "Wild Bunch": Tara Connolly, DWS; Tani Pack Downing, DWS; Emily Eyre, USOE; Stacey Floyd, DWS; Pamela Grubaugh-Littig, DNR; Debbie Lyberger, DWS; Bryan Morris, DOC; John Olson, DWS; and Homa Shabestari, UDOT .

For more information about this program or the ADR Council, link to the following websites:

[www.dhrm.gov](http://www.dhrm.gov)

<http://www.tax.utah.gov/adr>